



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
OFFICE OF PROTECTION AND ADVOCACY FOR HANDICAPPED
AND DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED PERSONS

Testimony of the Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities
Before the Committee on Transportation

Presented by James McGaughey
Executive Director
March 11, 2009

Good morning and thank you for this opportunity to comment on **Committee Bill No. 444, An Act Concerning Parking for Persons who are Blind and Persons with Disabilities Which Limit or Impair the Ability to Walk.**

This proposal would address a number of the most frequent complaints our Office hears from individuals with disabilities who depend on the availability of handicapped parking spaces to assure accessibility at their jobs, homes, transportation centers, public and commercial buildings, and a wide variety of other community locations. Its provisions would signal an end to the current practice of granting open-ended permits to use handicapped parking, adopting instead reasonable standards for issuance and a generally workable process for periodic renewal. It is especially heartening to see language that require placards to be returned when the persons to whom they are issued move out of state or die, and also to see provisions for an on-line complaint system. Taken together, these changes should make things fairer and better for everyone.

Based on our agency's experience fielding frequent questions and complaints regarding parking, I would suggest a few minor changes:

1. Not all individuals with disabilities can easily get to a DMV location where photo-identification cards are issued. Some such individuals may use sophisticated medical technologies to help them live in their homes, and often receive support from relatives who have cared for them since they were children, or through a network of care-givers who work directly for the individual, but whose available time is rigidly scheduled and often quite limited. Others with circulatory and respiratory impairments may experience extreme fatigue or compromise from lengthy waits and seasonal weather conditions. These individuals are usually driven by others, and find that being able to use reserved handicapped parking is extremely important to them. They may not currently have a DMV-issued identity card, and the usual process of obtaining one may prove quite burdensome to them. The needs of these people could be met by inserting language new Section (p) to the effect that the regulations DMV is to adopt "shall recognize that applicants with disabilities may request modifications of procedures for issuing photo-identification cards based on individual

circumstances and need. Such requests for modifications shall be granted where adherence to procedures would constitute an unreasonable hardship for the applicant.”

2. We have received a number of inquiries from people who are traveling by air, and need to park in handicapped parking spaces at the airport. To do so legally they need to leave their placards in their vehicles. However, they intend to rent cars at their destinations and need to take the placards with them so they can legally park in handicapped parking spaces at their destinations. This issue could be addressed by either requiring airport parking authorities to issue a temporary permit based on the individual’s official, permanent placard, or by requiring DMV to do the same.

Thank you for your attention. If there are any questions, I will try to answer them.